

Remarks/Arguments:

In response to the Office Action, the applicants offer the following remarks directed to the claims in the order presented.

A. Claims 1-13: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 1-13 have been allowed. Accordingly, original claims 1-13 are retained without amendment.

B. Claims 14-17: The Office Action rejects claims 14-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as their invention. The applicants note that claims 14-17 would be allowable if amended to overcome the rejection under Section 112, both because claims 14-17 depend from allowed claim 13 and because the Office Action did not reject any of claims 14-17 based on cited art. Consequently, the applicants have amended claims 14-17 to more clearly define the claimed invention. As amended, the applicants submit that ambiguity has been eliminated and claims 14-17 are in condition for allowance.

C. Claims 18-21: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 18-21 have been allowed. Accordingly, original claims 18-21 are retained without amendment.

D. Claims 22-24: The Office Action rejects claims 22-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as their invention. The applicants note that claims 22-24 would be allowable if amended to overcome the rejection under Section 112, because the Office Action did not reject any of claims 22-24 based on cited art. Consequently, the applicants have amended claims 22-24 to more clearly define the claimed invention. As amended, the applicants submit that ambiguity has been eliminated and claims 22-24 are in condition for allowance.

E. Claims 25-28: The Office Action rejects claims 25-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as their invention. The Office Action did not identify a specific portion of any of claims 25-28 found indefinite and the applicants have found none. Therefore, the applicants believe that claims 25-28 were rejected only as dependent on base claim 22, which was rejected as indefinite. Because claim 22 has been amended to overcome the rejection under Section 112, the applicants submit that original claims 25-28 are also in condition for allowance without further amendment.

F. Claims 29-35: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 29-35 have been allowed. Accordingly, original claims 29-35 are retained without amendment.

G. Claims 36-39: The Office Action rejects claims 36-39 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as their invention. The applicants note that claims 36-39 would be allowable if amended to overcome the rejection under Section 112, both because claims 36-39 depend from allowed claim 35 and because the Office Action did not reject any of claims 36-39 based on cited art. Consequently, the applicants have amended claims 36-39 to more clearly define the claimed invention. As amended, the applicants submit that ambiguity has been eliminated and claims 36-39 are in condition for allowance.

H. Claims 40-45: The Office Action rejects claims 40-45 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over either U.S. Patent No. 5,384,311 issued to Antenucci et al. or U.S. Patent No. 5,270,071 issued to Sharp et al. The applicants have canceled claims 40-45, without prejudice to the filing of a continuation application including those claims, to expedite allowance of the subject application.

I. Claims 46-49: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 46-49 have been allowed. Accordingly, original claims 46-49 are retained without amendment.

J. Claims 50-59: The Office Action rejects claims 50-59 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over either U.S. Patent No. 5,384,311 issued to Antenucci et al. or U.S. Patent No. 5,270,071 issued to Sharp et al. The applicants have canceled claims 50-59, without prejudice to the filing of a continuation application including those claims, to expedite allowance of the subject application.

K. Claims 60 & 61: The Office Action objects to claims 60 and 61 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, namely, claim 59. The Office Action states, however, that claims 60 and 61 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 60 has been amended to constitute a rewrite of claim 60 in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim 59 (no claims intervene between claims 59 and 60). Consequently, claim 60 has been amended to place that claim into condition for allowance. Original claim 61 depends from claim 60 and is allowable without further amendment.

L. Claims 62-74: The applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that claims 62-74 have been allowed. Accordingly, original claims 62-74 are retained without amendment.

M. Claims 75-86: The Office Action rejects claims 75, 80, 85, and 86 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,423,358 issued to Barndt et al. The Office Action also rejects claims 76-79 and 81-84 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over the '358 patent issued to Barndt et al. in combination with the '311 patent issued to Antenucci et al. The applicants have canceled claims 75-86, without prejudice to the filing of a continuation application including those claims, to expedite allowance of the subject application.

N. Conclusion: Claims 14-17, 22-24, and 36-39 have been amended and, as amended, particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicants regard as their invention. The requirements of Section 112, second paragraph, are now met. With those requirements met, claims 1-39, 46-49, and 60-74 are patentable.

The rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103, and 112 and the objections should all be withdrawn. Favorable action is earnestly solicited. Finally, the Examiner is invited to call the applicants' undersigned representative if any further action will expedite the prosecution of the application or if the Examiner has any suggestions or questions concerning the application or the present Response. In fact, if the claims of the application are not believed to be in full condition for allowance, for any reason, the applicants respectfully request the constructive assistance and suggestions of the Examiner in drafting one or more acceptable claims pursuant to MPEP § 707.07(j) or in making constructive suggestions pursuant to MPEP § 706.03 so that the application can be placed in allowable condition as soon as possible and without the need for further proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,



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August 7, 2003
Patricia C. Baxella

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